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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PTER KPAL RS IS GOI EXTERNAL

SUBJECT: GOI POSTPONES FURTHER DISCUSSION ON CHANGES TO  
ISRAEL'S RUSSIA POLICY

Classified By: Political Counselor Norman Olsen; Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)  
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1. (C) According to both the Israeli NSC and MFA, the GOI's high-level discussion on Russia policy held on February 28 revealed that there will be no substantial changes in Israeli-Russian relations until after the March 28 Knesset elections. National Security Adviser Giora Eiland reportedly briefed A/PM Ehud Olmert -- as well as senior defense, foreign affairs, and intelligence officials -- on the results of a nearly year-long review of Israeli-Russian relations. The meeting adjourned without any major decisions, and Olmert postponed further discussions on the issue until after the elections. Olmert later told the press that "Israel has an interest in advancing improved relations with Russia and in enhancing the ongoing bilateral dialogue on all levels."

2. (C) Deputy NSA Eran Etzion explained that what he called the GOI's subdued reaction to the upcoming Hamas trip to Moscow had been, at least in part, an effort to avoid alienating ethnic Russian voters in Israel. At the same time, opposition by Israeli intelligence services and political concerns about attacks from the Israeli right led Olmert's advisers to postpone further discussion on NSC proposals for closer coordination with Moscow on the Iranian nuclear issue. MFA Director for Eurasia Ana Azari jokingly remarked that the only significant outcome of the meeting was the lack of any leaks that would generate renewed tension with Moscow.

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